

Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
 Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, Connecticut

Vol. XXXVI no. 2

December 2020

Elm Restoration Project planting at Wood Parcel

Over 60 volunteers planted 20 saplings

In the final phase of the elm restoration project in the flood plain forest of the Great Meadows, 20 saplings were planted at the Wood parcel. These were added to the 5 planted in spring of 2019, the 25 planted on the Walker easement or coal wharf in fall of 2019, the 25 planted on the DiPaola parcel in 2011, and 25 planted near the Glastonbury boat house.

The Dutch Elm disease, a tree pandemic of world-wide impact, took the Great Elm on Broad Street Wethersfield and millions of street trees around the world in the early 20th Century. Attempts to control the virus spread with DDT failed with dire consequences for birds.

In the flood plain forest, the elm species continued to



Tim Lewis installs deer cages while TNC Land Steward Sophie Duncan attaches labels and records GPS location and cultivar of each of the 25 Dutch Elm Disease tolerant elms for follow-up comparative study.

survive and propagate, but seldom reached its former grandeur.

While plant scientists have been breeding disease “tolerant” cultivars for street and park use for years, this project of the Nature Conservancy and US Forest Service intends to inject DED tolerant DNA into the wild forest and study the results over time.

Over 60 volunteers joined in the Wood parcel planting, around the parking area and along the trail through the woods where the saplings will grow, blossom, hybridize with each other and native trees, and evolve with the virus.

In addition to getting some fresh air, exercise, and planting instruction, those volunteers will have an abiding interest in seeing the tree they planted grow and prosper. See the photos of the smiling masked faces on pages 4 and 5!

Betty Schmitt: a force for nature in elms, archaeological exploration, the landfill, and saving land

Betty Schmitt passed away in October after a courageous battle with cancer, bequeathing her many projects and her inspired example to Trust members. Betty’s background in State Education Department grant work prepared her to bring GMCT land acquisition procedures up to Land Trust Alliance standards. The Baril parcel in Point Meadow, the First Church parcel in Glastonbury Meadows, Frechette Field and the Dowd parcel on the “Great Plain” on Elm Street in Wethersfield, all benefited from careful negotiations, environmental appraisals, surveys, and painstaking documentation in the archives under Betty’s Land Acquisition Committee chairmanship.

From her home on Tryon Street, looking out over Nayuag, Betty embraced the rich farmland and the long productive tradition of farmers who cared about the land. **See Betty, p.2.**



Betty Schmitt: 1946—2020

Join or renew your membership now! Go to www.gmct.org/membership or use this form.

() \$20 – Individual () \$350 – Life Member Name _____

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Send Check payable to Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. to P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033



Betty In addition to champi-
from p. 1 oning her farm fam-
ily neighbors, Betty



State archeologist Nick Bellanti and Betty at digs exploring the earliest English settlement in Glastonbury.

embraced the archeological digs of the early settlement in Nayaug that revealed the close interaction of 17th and early 18th century English and Native American peoples, and enthusiastically shared those findings with programs for middle school children.

Betty also brought her attention to detail, her tenacity, and her mastery of arcane DEEP environmental law to the long term

saga of the closure plan of the former Rocky Hill landfill. Partly through her efforts, a plan by the owner to add 30 feet of degraded soil was blocked and an environmentally sound closure plan may soon be in sight.

Memorial donations in Betty's memory to the Trust will fund a bench at Ferry Park.



Betty leans on a shovel, at the coal wharf elm planting she had arranged. TNC Land manager Sophie Duncan and TNC forester Christian Marks, stand to her left, with Whit Osgood and Sandi Kelly.

2020 saw the deaths of three past GMCT presidents

Neal Cox, Jr., President 1998-1999

Neal Cox was a genuine member of the greatest generation, serving for four years in the US-AAF in England and France during WWII. After the war he graduated from MIT as an electrical engineer, worked in New Britain and Alabama before joining the Connecticut Foundry and settling in a Victorian home high on Riverview Road in Rocky Hill.

Not only did Neal serve the GMCT as board member, treasurer and president in the 90's and beyond, his civic involvement included holding local and district offices of the Rotary Club. He served as a Rotary Volunteer working with International Executive Service Corps, going overseas to developing countries as a consultant in the foundry industry, including Morocco, Ukraine, and Thailand.

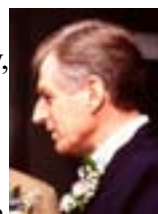
Neal was a gentle man as well as a gentleman, who brought his dry sense of humor to the 50th Anniversary celebration, sharing a humorous story of the removal of a junk car from a branch of Goff Brook. After noticing an advertisement for the service of removing old cars free of charge, "satisfaction guaranteed," Neal called and arranged to meet the man near the meadows. When Neal pointed out the derelict Caddy with the tree growing out of it, the young man allowed that, "This wasn't what I had in mind." But following Neal's cheerful, "Well, as long as we're here...", out came the Caddy, tree and all. Neal sent the tow truck operator off knowing he had another satisfied customer.



1923-2020

John Lepper, President 1991-1994

John Lepper was active in the Trust in the 90's during the 1993 25th Anniversary, presiding over the celebration. Below he is pictured presenting an award to Hilda Standish, MD. Hilda, wife of a childhood friend of Eleanor Wolf, was integral in the acquisition of the Standish parcel, strategically located to stop the race track proposal. John retired as a Sergeant Major in the Army Reserves, and worked with the Farm Bureau for many years, advocating for Connecticut farmers. He interviewed Wethersfield dairy farmer Burt Harris, in the 50's, about his new hi-tech all electric dairy barn.



1938-2020



Frank Childs, President 1985-1989

Frank Childs was active in the Trust in the decade of the 80's, a decade when 10 parcels were added to the Trust holdings. Frank was active in land management and acquisitions, serving as President from 1985 to 1989.

Frank graduated from Amherst College Magna Cum Laude in 1953 and received his PhD in Biology from the UC Berkeley in 1957. Frank met his wife of 59 years, Julie, at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole in 1958. Their summer romance turned into a lifelong commitment, and they spent every summer in Woods Hole, many at the MBL. After a long career teaching biology at the University of Chicago and Trinity College in Hartford, he retired to Woods Hole. Frank's research specialty was cell biology.



1931-2020

Source to the Sea cleanup 2020 Covid-19 style The usual trash and a view of Folly Brook Nature area

Volunteers from the community, members of the WHS Environmental Club, and political leaders joined members of the GMCT for a very successful cleanup. For the first time, the cleanup was extended to the area of Folly Brook Nature Area east of I91, giving volunteers a view of the area of the approach to Brainard Airport, where trees considered to be safety obstructions will be cut in the near future.

WHS Enviro Club members (r.) line up on the dock or board Al Waples boat.

On the MDC sewer outfall, (l. to r.) town councilor and state rep to be Amy Bello, Jim Woodworth, Cindy Greenblatt, Representative Kerry Wood, and Pete Spangenberg joined the cleanup and toured the Nature Area, observing the trash below the eagles nest.



Bob Ludwig, Pete Spangenberg, and Tim Lewis line up the trash haul before loading the dump-



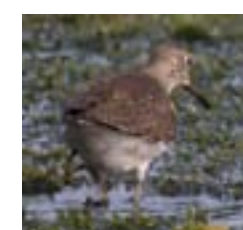
ster, provided by the CT River Conservancy. CRC's Kelsey Wentling (not pictured) handled waivers.

Mayor Mike Rell and town Manager Gary Evans (l.) took the tour and gathered trash as well.

GMCT joined with CRC to remove water chestnut Cleaning Wethersfield Cove, Crow Point Cove and Hales Creek

Water chestnut is the latest aquatic invasive plant to multiply in local waters. Trust members have successfully controlled infestation in Crow Point and Wethersfield Cove over the last two years, with small amounts this summer.

In Hales Creek, the cut off river channel parallel to Second Lane behind Crow Point, however, the infestation had grown out of control. Trust members, under the leadership of Tim Lewis filled Tim's pickup twice and Pete Spangenberg's another time, but left a lot for future years. Each chestnut plant is gently tugged to pull the roots out of the soft mud creek bottom. Tim's method of having kayakers fill bins in a canoe, then towing the canoe to the landing was fairly efficient, given the low river level and the shallow waters of the creek. Pickup loads were transported to the Wood parcel and spread as mulch to control land based invasive species. Volunteers are already looking forward to next summer's water chestnut pull in the beautiful setting of Hales Creek. New volunteers welcome!



A solitary sandpiper walks on hydrilla.

Hydrilla—an aquatic invasive totally out of control

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), a relative newcomer in the state, forms dense stands that crowd out native vegetation, harm fisheries, limit recreation, impede navigation and reduce property values. Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) scientist Greg Bugbee and GPS expert Summer Stebbins studied the invasive species in the CT River, mapping infestations into an app, including stands in Wethersfield Cove. Unlike water chestnut that can be pulled by volunteers, scientists are just beginning to research how to control hydrilla. Perhaps Wethersfield Cove and Hales Creek could qualify for grants for experimental control methods or pilot projects to control the harmful invasive.

Colorful Masks couldn't hide smiles of satisfaction as holes were dug, roots trimmed, trees planted and watered



Troop 85 came out in force, not only planting many of the remotest trees, but also teaming up to move large logs.



Girl Scout Cadette Troop 10276 dug in a tree.

Postponed from Arbor Day/Earth Day, fall planting of DED tolerant elms avoided the summer drought and will give each sapling a strong start.



Brendan Quinn and Lenore



Paul, Sam and Tom Woodworth



Jennifer, Jason, and Journey Horn



WHS Environmental Club members planted trees around the meadow and hauled water from Beaver Brook to soak them in. Photos courtesy of Joanne Norris.



Eric Maziarz and Patrick planted a Prairie Expedition elm tree next to Dad's beehive that produced honey in the spring, but not over the dry summer. Analysis showed lots of staghorn sumac pollen.



Ben and James Lewis



Vivian, Mickey and Alison Kaye



Zoe Kleeblatt

Native Flora and Fauna thrive at the Wood parcel throughout the seasons



Spring migrant black and white warbler forages on the bark of a maple tree.



Here's looking at you, tree squirrel!



Immature female oriole with her mottled head.



A rose breasted grosbeak pauses to float its sweet song.



American elderberry thrives in moist humusy soil. Delicate white flowers, black berries.



Silky dogwood with porcelain blue berries is festooned with the delicate white flowers of the virgin's bower vine.



High in a large elm snag, a red bellied woodpecker inspects a potential nesting site.



Mystery solved: a fawn standing near an elm planting site browsed newly planted elms. Deer cages needed!



Laura Volz Poulin and her daughter Sarah sprinkle jewel-like messages of love and kindness along the trail.



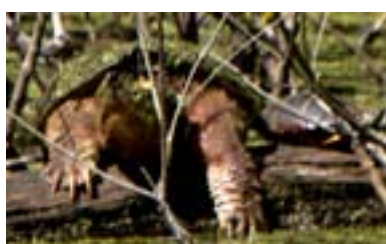
A woodland vole ventured into the trail.



Northern parulas—migrating or moving in? A female hiding her yellow patches.



Yellow warblers nest along streams



On sunny mornings painted turtles line up on the logs, but one day a huge snapper barged in.



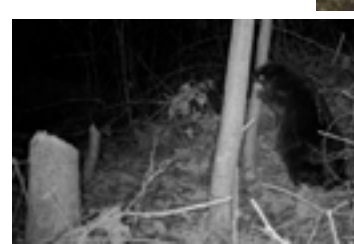
A grove of American cranberry.



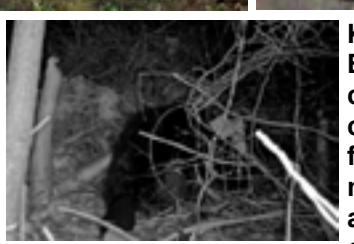
Smooth carrion flower is an interesting vine.



Marbled orb weaver spins a round web every morning and re-absorbs it every night!



Beaver, residents of Beaver Brook, work hard all summer to raise a family, maintain dams and lodges, but come late fall, time to lay in a winter food supply. So far, 6 aspen trees, 1 to 5 inches, were cut and removed.



Kathy Beaty's critter cam confirms the nocturnal activities of a busy creature at the Wood parcel.

Trail at DiPaola Parcel dubbed Goff Brook Trail Cleared, widened, mowed, and marked

Thanks to the persistence and leadership of Ed Chiucarello, the seasonal trail at the DiPaola parcel was transformed by the good work of Trust volunteers Bob Ludwig and his chain saw, Jim Zagroba, Linda Nielson wielding weed-wackers, Tim Lewis with the brush mower, and Deb Creedan, the intrepid poison ivy puller (at right). Ed put the finishing touches on the trail, painting white trail markings and posting a map (above) at the entrance.



with white bluests with yellow centers. A walk in the fall through a rustling carpet of leaves, hickory nuts and acorns, brings its own pleasure.

The white tail deer, regular users of the trail, leave most of their tracks under cover of the night. Kathy Beaty's critter cam captured the two point buck at right along the trail at 5 am on a recent morning, along with coyote, turkey and bobcat.



Goff Brook Trail



The trail has been part of the winter walk for years, but now it can be enjoyed year round by the public. At right, for a brief moment in the spring, the flood plain forest is carpeted

Sarah E. Wood: 1939-2020 Sold 20 acre parcel to GMCT in 2001

Sarah Wood's family settled in a two family house on Warner Place where Sarah was born. Soon, they purchased the 30 acre Robbins farm nearby. In the photo below Sarah and her family are relaxing under the shade of the large spruce tree in the yard. In 1958 the construction of the Route 3 Putnam Bridge approach and I91 resulted in the razing of the historic



home. Sarah's father built the modern Dutch colonial on Middletown Avenue that Sarah lived in with her beloved dogs until a few years ago.

One of very few African American families in Wethersfield, Sarah attended local schools, graduating from WHS in 1957. Following in her mother's footsteps into a career in education, Sarah earned a B.S. at HBCU Central State in Ohio, where her involvement in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority began and

continued for a lifetime. She was an active member of A.M.E. Zion Church in Hartford. Sarah's career began in a classroom at Goodwin School in East Hartford, later serving as Director of Guidance at Prince Tech, and ending

her career in administrative positions in Danbury middle and high schools. After retirement she returned to her childhood home on Middletown Avenue, choosing to preserve the 20 remaining acres of the cherished farm by selling to the GMCT. She continued to depend on her classmate David Anderson to mow the lot on Middletown Avenue. At left is a photo of the brick fireplace Sarah's father had built for family cookouts and Girl Scout camp outs. Along the brook and in the marsh and flood plain forest, native flora and fauna have flourished.



SARAH ELIZABETH WOOD
"I am wealthy in my friends."
"Woody" . . . nest denser . . . slender . . . always having a good time . . . enjoyed solitude . . . fine features . . . likes dramatic club activities . . . "Oh yes, see who?" . . . enjoys calypso music and modern jazz . . . main hobby is writing.
Dramatic Club 2, 3, Chair 2; Forum Policy 3, 4; Bowling 4.

Brisk Winter Walks — 2021

Covid-19 adaptations! Walks are by Pre-registration only. Please register for each walk through Eventbrite. Go to www.gmct.org and follow the link to the walk you'd like to join. Each scheduled walk will be broken into groups of 10 walkers, each group departing on the half hour. Registrants will receive a free "ticket" to a specific departure time. With each reservation, registrants will be required to submit a waiver form that includes contact information and a pledge to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and stay home if they are experiencing any of the symptoms of Covid-19. Walkers are asked to arrive close to the start time of their assigned group to avoid large gatherings.

GMCT Brisk Winter Walks for 2021 are co-sponsored by the Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury, the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center in Wethersfield, and Goodwin College.

Friday, January 1, 1:00 pm, Wethersfield. About 1½ hours. Meet Jim Woodworth at 160 Middletown Ave, south of Maple St, on GMCT's **Wood** parcel. Cross the shiny bridge and follow the trail along the marsh and around the loop past the 18th century house site. Learn about the promise of the Elm Restoration Project. Hike will continue across the culvert by the Pond, and out along the edge of the farm fields that once hosted the original "Pyquag" Native American summer camp, and then along the Beaver Brook marsh, across the **Frechette Field**, and the newly acquired **Dowd** parcel.

Sunday, January 3, 1:00 pm, Rocky Hill. About 2 hours. Meet at the meadows gate at 78 Goff Brook Lane, off of Old Main St. Join Jim Woodworth on a hike to several of our parcels in the Rocky Hill Meadows. We'll walk the farm roads, take a turn around the new **Goff Brook Trail** in the **DiPaola** parcel, and walk out into the meadows, noting the TNC flood plain forest study transect and the planting of DED tolerant Elm Trees.

Sunday, January 10, 1:00 pm, Glastonbury. About 2 hours. Meet Penny Rusnak at the Glastonbury ferry landing on Ferry Lane for a short turn around the Ferry Park trail, and then cross Ferry Lane and walk upstream along the River through fields and pastures to the **Walker** easement on the **Coal Wharf**. Nearby are archeological digs dating to the earliest settlement in Glastonbury, and a planting of DED tolerant elm trees positioned to spread their seeds on the spring freshet to the flood plain forests down-stream.

Sunday, January 17, 1:00 pm, Wethersfield. About 1 hour. Meet Jim Woodworth at 412 Hartford Ave, corner of Jordan Lane, for a short walk through the gate to our **Wolf** parcel and **DeMille** easement. See habitat improvements made with the help of a WHIP grant and volunteer work. Stay for a longer walk, another two and a half hours, up Hartford Ave. and out along the Hartford dike that divides the Folly Brook Nature area from the South Meadows Industrial Park. We'll walk through the area slated for "tree removal" for the Brainard Airport approach and learn about advantages of "shrub/scrub" and early successional habitats.

Saturday, January 23, 9:00 am, Wethersfield. Meet Jim Woodworth and Goodwin College's Bruce Morton, Program Director of Environmental Studies, at the Putnam Park parking lot, 100 Great Meadow Road, just north of the Putnam Bridge. We'll peel away the centuries to imagine the river bank before the bridge, and explore the 300+ acre **Crow Point** property owned by Goodwin College. We'll observe the process of nature reclaiming the land and waterways excavated for fill to build the highway across the ancient farmland and wetlands of the Great Meadows.

Thursday, January 28, 4:30 pm, Wethersfield. As the winter twilight fades in the western sky, meet GMCT's Mike Munroe and Bike Walk Wethersfield's Kevin Sullivan, at the Keeney Center parking lot, 200 Main Street, Old Wethersfield. Walkers will stroll down Main Street to Wethersfield Cove Park (about 1 mile), walk through the parking lot to the Cove channel, under the I91 overpass and out to the River's edge. The Wolf Moon will rise above the trees on the eastern shore, giving the luster of mid-day to the river below!

Sunday, January 31, 1:00 pm, Glastonbury. About 2 hours. Meet Penny Rusnak at the Glastonbury Boat House, 252 Welles St. View the beautiful River from the boat house veranda and Riverfront Park. Follow the trail through the park, past the DED tolerant elm trees, and down along the riverbank to the **Preissner** parcel and the **First Church of Christ** parcel in the Glastonbury meadows. Return along the trail or loop up to Main Street. Longer distance walkers can continue along the river toward the **Matava** and **Austin** parcels.

Saturday, February 6, 9:00 am, East Hartford. Meet GMCT's Jim Woodworth and Rick Doran, Goodwin College's Bruce Morton, Program Director of Environmental Studies, and Charley Smith of Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury at Hockanum Park, 324 High St. Explore our **Wilson-Carvalho** and **Hockanum Meadows** parcels in the "Wethersfield Triangle" of land marooned on the east side by the meandering of the river. We'll explore the new trails that Goodwin College has constructed from South Meadow Road along the River toward Putnam Bridge.

Dress for the weather and ground conditions, including mud or snow. Weather and water conditions may revise or cancel. These areas are used for hunting, so wear an orange vest if you have one. Call Jim Woodworth for the latest information, 860-808-9968. Free.



Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
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Taking in the half moon over the Beaver Brook marsh on an early fall evening..